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SELECTED LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, edited by A. T. BAKER, M.A., Ph.D. [of the University of Sheffield, England] Manchester, England, University Press. Longmans, Green & Co., London and New York. 1918, lxviii+147 pages. 3s. 6d. (\$1.10).

This volume of Professor Baker is a worthy companion to his edition of Molière's *L'Avare* in the same *French Series for Schools* whose general editor is Professor L. E. Kastner of the University of Manchester. In an Introduction of some 60 pages Professor Baker sets the stage, so to speak, for the 108 pages of selected letters. This stage setting is well done and it was quite necessary. It is impossible to place Madame de Sévigné firmly in the mind of the average student until he has a fairly accurate knowledge of the social, political, economic and literary events to which the letters constantly refer. Perhaps a fair criticism of Professor Baker's introduction would be the statement that the political side of this stage setting has been slightly overdone, when comparison is made with other, equally necessary, portions of the picture. Nearly one half of the introductory pages is given to matters political and economic. We believe that the social side of Madame de Sévigné's life should have been stressed more than the political conditions under which society then lived. However, others may think differently, and we have no wish to press this point. The introduction is very helpful and by a system of constant references to the letters in the text, we are able to see clearly the connection of Madame de Sévigné with the events mentioned. The indented paragraph headings "Posting and Letters," "Danger of Travel," "Court Ceremonial," "Piety at Court," etc. are very helpful especially when we are able to read in connection with these paragraphs the letters themselves as illustrations.

There are thirty pages of notes, five of bibliography and five of index. This index not only includes the proper names mentioned in the letters and the introduction, but also covers the syntactical peculiarities explained in the notes. It is here that we would offer several suggestions. We do not think that the explanation of syntactical and idiomatic difficulties is adequate, at least for any but the most advanced student. Idioms are almost the last thing that students learn well. Especially difficult are what might be called the picturesque idioms in which Madame de Sévigné abounds. The average student dictionary lists a relatively small number of idioms, and where else, (except in more extensive readings than the student of such an edition is apt to have had), is he to learn the meaning of these idioms? We have not gone through all the selections with this thought in mind, but we offer the following, culled here and there, as deserving of an explanation which they do not receive in Professor Baker's notes:

Page 2 line 6 *hurler avec les loups*; Page 51 line 2 *qui enlève la paille*; Page 7 line 14 *tuer à terre*; Page 10 line 4 *querelle d'Allemand*; Page 11 line 38 *renverser tout l'ordre gothique de famille*; Page 14 line 14 *avoir la berlue*; Page 14 line 16 *jetez-vous votre langue aux chiens*; Page 14 lines 16-20 *le donner en trois. . . en quatre, en dix, en cent*; Page 86 line 19 *recevoir Notre Seigneur*; Page 16 line 23 *à bride abbatue*.

Many of these idioms, the list of which might be greatly extended, seem doubtless common enough to teachers, but how often have we found that students know such things? They stumble and fall over the very simplest. Perhaps the student in England receives a better training in this respect than his brother in America, in which case Professor Baker's notes will suffice there, but not here.

A few minor points anent the notes are as follows:—

The note to page 1 line 22 *vous peuvent amuser*, explaining the position of the pronoun in the seventeenth century, should have been inserted as early as the 8th line of that page to cover the first instance of that peculiarity, *je les viens de faire*.

The note to page 1 line 27 referring us to page xxvi of the Introduction in apparent explanation of the expression *je vous fais parc* is not very satisfying.

It might have helped to understand the indignation of Madame de Sévigné if the notes had quoted the offensive portrait of her by her cousin Bussy Rabutin to which the letter on page 2 refers.

As a note to page 7 line 23 we suggest a reference to p. lvii of the Introduction regarding the two former wives of M. de Grignan. The humor of *toutes* in this connection would then be apparent. As it is, the student is left somewhat in the dark.

A note to page 87 line 30 explains Du Chesne as "a famous Paris doctor," but we are left quite uninformed as to the identity of "*L'Anglois*" who is mentioned prominently several times in the same letter. Yet he seems to have been as "famous" as the other, if not more so.

In the Bibliography page 139, first line, *Bossier* is a mistake for *Boissier*. While we do not believe in overburdening a bibliography, yet the following titles might perhaps have as great a claim as some that Professor Baker includes:

The translation of Gaston Boissier's *Madame de Sévigné* by Melville B. Anderson in the *Great French Writers* series. Chicago, McClurg, 1889. Two volumes. London 1873; Lamartine's *Life of Mme. de Sévigné*. Perhaps also mention might be made of Mrs. S. J. Hale's translation of a selection of the *Letters of Mme. de Sévigné to her daughter and friends*. Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1889.

It is clear that Madame de Sévigné is scarcely the type of reading for other than third or fourth year classes in college, at least in

America. We doubt if many teachers in our high schools could find a place in their reading lists for this book. It is certainly unfortunate, but it is none the less true, that we have been moving away from the seventeenth century rather than toward it in our American high schools. For college classes, however, we know of no better selection of Madame de Sévigné than Professor Baker's. There are but two American selections, that by Professor Harrison, (Ginn & Co. 1899), and the one by L. C. Syms (American Book Co., 1898). The fact that this has not been reprinted, at least to our knowledge, has a bearing upon what has been said above. The only other selection with English notes is that by Gustave Masson which is Vol. IV in the *Clarendon Press Series of French Classics* published in 1868. This last has a much larger selection of letters, 270 pages, but the introductory material is not equal in volume or in value to that in Professor Baker's edition. There are, of course, many French editions of selected letters. Perhaps the best known of these in the edition of *Classiques Français* issued by Hachette.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

FRENCH

BARNES, JESSIE F., *Histoires et Jeux*. Ginn and Co. 108 pp. 1922.
\$0.76.

A collection of legends, stories, songs and games written in very simple language and adapted for use with young children.

BRUNO, *Le Tour de la France par deux Enfants*, abridged and edited with notes, exercises, French questions and vocabulary by E. A. WHITENACK. Allyn and Bacon. 228 pp. 1922.

A new edition of this French text which is well adapted to acquaint American students with the geography, industries and customs of France. Its popularity in France may be judged by the fact that it has gone through 381 editions.

CONTES DE LA FRANCE CONTEMPORAINE, edited with notes and vocabulary by W. M. DANIELS. D. C. Heath and Co., 264 pp., 1922. \$1.04.

Sixteen stories by such well-known modern authors as Anatole Le Braz, René Bazin, Emile Moselly, Charles Le Goffic, Auguste Marin, Georges d'Esparbès, André Lichtenberger, Paul Bourget, Anatole France, Paul Arène, Paul Féval, Daudet and Maupassant. This edition will acquaint students with the work of important contemporary writers whose works have been hitherto inaccessible in school texts.